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TOWARD

Christian Unity

AND A

World Council

OF CHURCHES

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

"THE CHRISTIAN sees distinction of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts. Against racial pride and race antagonism the Church must set its face implacably as rebellion against God.

"GOD IS HIMSELF the source of justice of which the state is not lord but servant. The Christian can acknowledge no ultimate authority but God; his loyalty to the State is part of his loyalty to God and must never usurp the place of that primary and only absolute loyalty. **** We are one in acknowledging that this allegiance takes precedence of any other allegiance that may make claims upon us."

from the "Proclamation of Christian Principles"—Oxford and Edinburgh reports.

☆ A PROCLAMATION AND A PLAN

THESE pronouncements on two of the burning moral and political issues of the day are part of the proclamation of Christian principles issued by the historic Conferences of the Churches which took place at Edinburgh and Oxford in the summer of 1937. There Christians representing 130 denominations from fifty nations and political sub-divisions met to consider ways and means whereby the Christian Church the world over may with greater unity and power deal with the existing crisis of civilization.

Out of these two Conferences, made possible in large part by the generosity of American men and women who believe in Christian cooperation and unity, came two outstanding results:

First, the affirmation of a new sense of existing unity, underlying the main differences of creed, race and language, coupled with a declaration of basic Christian principles around which Christians in every land may rally in dealing with the major problems of our day — War and Peace, Race and Nations, Church and State, Church and Community, Church and Economics, Youth and Education;

Second, a practical plan for unifying the common work of the churches and putting these principles into practice; a World Council of Churches which shall, under God, represent the united thought and action of the Christian Churches of the world.

THE CHURCH UNDER ATTACK

IT IS HIGH TIME that the churches mobilize for more effective common action. Christianity is being challenged as never before since the days of Constantine. From the fourth to the twentieth centuries the history of Christianity was a history of steady advance in winning the allegiance of mankind. But now there is a world-wide resurgence of non-Christian and anti-Christian forces. In Russia the church is outlawed. In Germany religious rights and liberties of Catholics and Protestants alike are increasingly restricted. In many countries the church is persecuted and its work destroyed.

Race pride and race antagonism, denounced as sin by all Christian authorities, Catholic and Protestant alike, are expressing themselves in constantly growing programs which spread persecution, terrorism and hate. No country is immune.

The dogma that the State is the be-all and end-all of existence with authority not only over man's political life but over his economic, social and religious life also—a dogma again denounced as sin by the highest

Catholic and Protestant authorities—is winning sensational victories and gaining new adherents in all parts of the world.

In the countries where religion is still free, multitudes have fallen away from the influence of the Church. They have lost their faith in an Almighty God. They have built their lives on philosophies of humanism or pure materialism. The citizens of these countries are no longer united by the possession of a common set of absolute beliefs regarding ultimate realities. Uncertain and bewildered, they lack the power to act together effectively to check the disintegrating forces which threaten their liberties and their security.

Civilization is being undermined by a world-wide process of moral deterioration.

THE WORLD IS TOO STRONG FOR A DIVIDED CHURCH

A WORLD PROCESS can only be dealt with effectively by a world force. The Christian Church possesses some 650,000,000 enrolled members throughout the world,—a

power great enough, if it could be directed to a single purpose, to turn the whole current of world progress in the direction of peace, liberty and restoration.

Unfortunately, this fellowship is not a single coherent united force, but on the contrary is divided into many scores of branches, sects and denominations which for generations past have been pursuing each its own independent way. One may appreciate to the full the inestimable spiritual treasures which the various denominations have made available to mankind. And still one may agree with the increasing number of Christians in all countries who hold that denominationalism, in its exclusive and uncooperative forms, is the chief and tragic weakness of the Church of Christ today.

In the United States alone, disregarding the smaller bodies, of which the Federal census lists more than 150, there are over fifty denominational bodies of the Protestant order with memberships ranging from 50,000 to 4,000,000. Christian laymen and ministers alike are growing more and more dissatisfied with the spiritual and economic waste of this

complicated denominational structure. Men who work together in civic and commercial enterprises cannot understand why they should divide their forces and resources in doing the work of the Church.

As Bishop Brent poignantly put it shortly before his death, "The world is too strong for a divided Church."

THE PROPOSED WORLD COUNCIL

SUCH ARE the conditions which have led to the proposal for a World Council of Churches. The functions of this Council will be to facilitate common action by the churches, to promote cooperation and study, to promote the consciousness of world fellowship in the members of all churches, to establish relations with denominational federations of world-wide scope and with other Christian world movements and to call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require. The Council will provide a central forum from which expression may be given uncompromisingly to certain universal stand-

ards of thought and conduct which Christians everywhere are called upon to follow. These pronouncements, coming with the immense influence of world-wide Christian conviction, cannot fail to have a marked effect on the course of events. (The Council is not confined to "non-Roman" churches, but as yet the Roman Catholic Church has not found it possible to participate.)

For Christians in all lands, including those where the churches are persecuted or exiled, the World Council will reinforce the sustaining consciousness of membership in a universal fellowship embracing all those who give allegiance to the Master, regardless of race, color or nationality.

HOW THE COUNCIL IS ORGANIZED

THE COUNCIL will consist of two bodies, the Assembly, which will be the principal authority, and a Central Committee. The Assembly shall be composed of not more than 450 members directly appointed by the churches themselves. This Assembly ordina-

rily will meet but once every five years. Approximately one-third of the Assembly will be laymen and women. It will elect its own officers.

Acting for the Assembly between meetings will be the Central Committee, consisting of not more than 90 members, also appointed by the churches, which will meet annually. The geographical distribution of the membership of the Committee, which is proportionally the same as that of the Assembly, is as follows: 17 representing the Orthodox Churches throughout the world; 22 representing the Churches of the continent of Europe; 12 representing the Churches of Great Britain and Ireland; 18 representing the Churches of the United States of America and Canada; 10 representing the Churches of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific Isles; 5 representing the Churches of South Africa, Australia, Asia, and areas not otherwise represented, and not more than six members representing minority churches which in the judgment of the Central Committee are not granted adequate representation by the above provisions. The Central Committee will act for

the Assembly between meetings and also will be its Finance Committee, formulating its budget and securing its financial support.

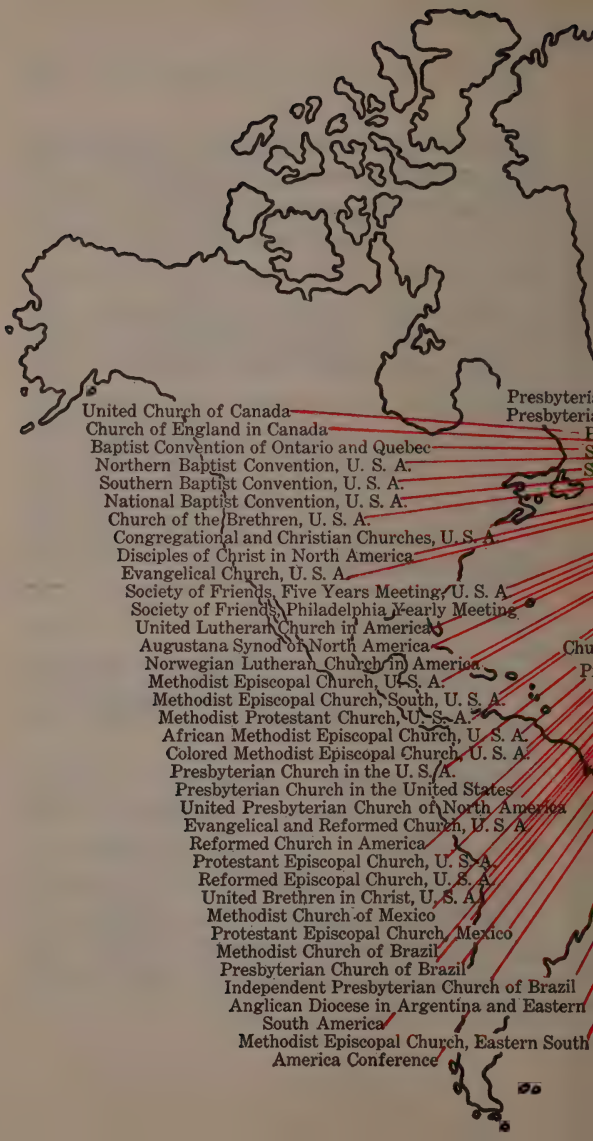
THE BACKGROUND OF THE WORLD COUNCIL

THE PROPOSAL for a World Council of Churches was submitted to the two Christian Conferences on Life and Work and on Faith and Order held at Oxford and Edinburgh in the summer of 1937 by a representative committee of churchmen from every major division of the Christian Church except the Church of Rome. The two movements commonly referred to as Life and Work, and Faith and Order, of which these conferences were an expression, embody the two main categories of the historic movement for Christian unity which has been gathering momentum rapidly since the turn of the present century. The Faith and Order movement consists of a series of conferences and discussions which are solving the differences that now separate the Churches, looking toward

the goal of one united Church. The Life and Work movement seeks the cooperation of all churches in application of Christ's teachings to the practical problems of the day. These movements held their first World Conferences at Stockholm, Sweden, in 1925, on Life and Work; and at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1927, on Faith and Order. Since then the two have worked in close harmony, their efforts culminating in the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences of last year. A primary responsibility of the proposed World Council will be to continue the work of the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements.

PRESENT STATUS OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

THE EDINBURGH AND OXFORD CONFERENCES appointed a committee of fourteen, seven from each, to draft a plan for a constitution for such a World Council and to submit it to the cooperating churches. In order to make sure that the constitution to be submitted should express the mind of the


United Church of Canada
Church of England in Canada
Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec
Northern Baptist Convention, U. S. A.
Southern Baptist Convention, U. S. A.
National Baptist Convention, U. S. A.
Church of the Brethren, U. S. A.
Congregational and Christian Churches, U. S. A.
Disciples of Christ in North America
Evangelical Church, U. S. A.
Society of Friends, Five Years Meeting, U. S. A.
Society of Friends, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
United Lutheran Church in America
Augustana Synod of North America
Norwegian Lutheran Church in America
Methodist Episcopal Church, U. S. A.
Methodist Episcopal Church, South, U. S. A.
Methodist Protestant Church, U. S. A.
African Methodist Episcopal Church, U. S. A.
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, U. S. A.
Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.
Presbyterian Church in the United States
United Presbyterian Church of North America
Evangelical and Reformed Church, U. S. A.
Reformed Church in America
Protestant Episcopal Church, U. S. A.
Reformed Episcopal Church, U. S. A.
United Brethren in Christ, U. S. A.
Methodist Church of Mexico
Protestant Episcopal Church, Mexico
Methodist Church of Brazil
Presbyterian Church of Brazil
Independent Presbyterian Church of Brazil
Anglican Diocese in Argentina and Eastern South America
Methodist Episcopal Church, Eastern South America Conference

Church of Scotland
Episcopal Church in Scotland
Congregational Union of Scotland
United Free Church of Scotland
Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland
Baptist Churches in Wales
Congregational Union of England and Wales
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Church of Sweden
Church of Denmark
Lutheran Church of Finland
Lutheran Church of Estonia
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Lutheran Church of Lithuania
Orthodox Church of Latvia
Orthodox Church of Poland
United Evan. Church of Poland
Reformed Evan. Church of Poland
Evangelical Church in Slovakia
German Evangelical Church in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia
Czech Brethren Evangelical Church
Czechoslovakian Church
Reformed Church in Slovakia
Reformed Church in Hungary
Lutheran Church in Hungary
Reformed Church in Transylvania
Protestant Church in Austria
Algemeene Doopsgezinde Societeit
Old Catholic Churches
Reformed Church of the Netherlands
Ev. Lutheran Church of the Netherlands
Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband
Remonstrantsche Broederschap
Union of Ev. Free Churches, Germany
Union of Prot. Evan. Churches of Belgium
Lutheran Church in Alsace and Lorraine
Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine
Ev. Lutheran Church of France
Reformed Churches of France
Reformed Evangelical Churches of France
Free Evangelical Church of France
Protestant Churches of Portugal
Evangelical Church of Spain
Swiss Church Federation
Waldensian Church, Italy
Greek Evangelical Church
Evangelical Churches of Bulgaria
Churches of the Confession of Augsburg in Yugoslavia and in Rumania
Church of Bulgaria
Church of Rumania
Church of Yugoslavia
Church of Albania
Church of Greece
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
Patriarchate of Alexandria
Patriarchate of Antioch
Patriarchate of Jerusalem
Patriarchate of Russia (in exile)
Church of Cyprus
Apostolic Church of Armenia
Assyrian Church
Egyptian Orthodox (Coptic) Church
Nippon Sei Kokwai
Kumiai Churches in Japan
Church of the United Brethren in Japan
Methodist Church in Japan
Church of Christ in China
Baptist Churches in China
Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui
North China Kung Li Hui
Presbyterian Church of Korea
Disciples of Christ in the Philippines
United Evangelical Church of the Philippines
Church of India, Burma and Ceylon
Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church
Orthodox Syrian Church of the East
Protestant Church in Netherlands India
United Church of North India
South India United Church
Church of the Province of South Africa
Anglican Dioceses of West Africa
Methodist Church of South Africa
Presbyterian Church of South Africa
Church of England in Australia and Tasmania
Methodist Church of Australasia
Church of the Province of New Zealand
Baptist Churches of New Zealand
Methodist Church of New Zealand
Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

From Representatives of these Churches Assembled at Oxford and Edinburgh came the Recommendation for a World Council of Churches.

Churches and be in accord with their wishes, an Advisory Conference of some 70 Church representatives, chosen in a series of "electoral conferences" in different countries, met at Utrecht in May of 1938 and unanimously adopted a constitution for such a World Council. The United States electoral conference, held in Washington, in January, 1938, was attended by delegates from virtually all denominations and sections of this country, and named fifteen American delegates to Utrecht.

In addition, the Utrecht Conference proposed an interim plan for carrying on the work that needs to be done before the Constitution can be ratified by the Churches. It recommended the formation of a Provisional Committee to be appointed by the two movements for this purpose. This proposal was subsequently adopted by the authorities of both movements. Both of these groups placed their stamp of approval upon the Constitution, substantially as it had been drafted.

In America a similar plan has been put into effect and joint committees in Canada and in the United States have been formed to carry on the work of both movements until

the World Council can become a reality.

The Constitution now is being sent to all of the 130 denominations from fifty nations that participated in the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences for ratification by their general assemblies.

A REMARKABLE RECEPTION

THE NEED and timeliness of the World Council is indicated by the reception of the proposed plan. There are actual records of more than 3,000 meetings to hear the plans discussed, and it is known that there have been a great many more. These have taken place in many sections of this country, as well as abroad.

The plan is known to have been described in considerable detail in nearly 200 church publications, with the probability that it has appeared in print in many others.

Institutes have been set up to study the World Council of Churches in many cities of America, including Evanston, Illinois; New Haven, Connecticut; Los Angeles and San

Francisco, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Rochester and Brooklyn, New York; Washington, D.C.; and Dallas, Texas.

The World Council was made the sole subject of discussion at the religious section of the Institute of Public Affairs held at the University of Virginia.

The Foreign Policy Association has devoted a number of meetings to the theme in New York and elsewhere, and several of its publications have discussed the World Council.

Radio broadcasts have been made over the networks of the National Broadcasting System, as well as over numerous individual stations.

Denominations in many countries have been taking action to endorse the World Council, although official action cannot, in many cases, be taken before the meeting of their official assemblies which, in some instances, will not be held for two or three years. Provisionally, however, 16 denominations in the United States and two in Canada, already have accepted the proposal.

THE PRESENT TASK

ENCOURAGING as these reports are, it must be remembered that there still are extensive areas in this country where the plans for the World Council are unknown.

The Constitution will evidently be ratified but the World Council will not become an effective reality until the rank and file of Christians of this and other countries understand its aims and the great need for its existence.

To create this understanding requires a great work of education. It is here that those who already are aware of the importance and significance of this plan for Christian Unity must lend their support.

There are two tangible ways in which that support may be given.

First, there must be moral and spiritual cooperation in spreading information about this movement. That cooperation can be given by joining, and asking others to join, the Friends of the World Council, now being organized. Further information about this organization will be sent on request.

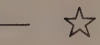
Second, there must be financial support for the Joint Executive Committee named by the American sections of the Faith and Order and Life and Work movements. This committee is charged with a dual responsibility—that of continuing the work of Christian Unity until the World Council is formed, and of handling all the details of education and organization necessary to bring about ratification of the Council's Constitution by the various denominational bodies.

The budget of this Committee for the year 1939 is $50,000, of which about $15,000 will be provided through church agencies. Thus, the immediate need of the Committee is for $35,000—less than the budget of many city churches.

The budget is divided as follows:

America's share in the expenses of the central offices in Europe pending the establishment of the World Council of Churches.... $12,000.

These are the established centers of the ecumenical movement in London,



Winchester, and Geneva. They are charged with carrying forward the work of the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences and maintaining research and educational activity in the fields of ecumenical cooperation and unity.

American Joint Executive Committee ..... 14,000.

This includes the work of promotion and education, the publication of "Christendom," and the part-time services of a secretary for field work among the theological seminaries.

American Section of the World Conference on Faith and Order 6,500.

This involves the promotion of studies and of conferences devoted to the carrying out of recommendations of the Edinburgh Conference, including the preparations for the World Council of Churches.

American Section of the Universal Christian Council ..... 17,500.

This includes the continuation of the previous responsibilities of the Section which serves as the Federal Council's Department of Relations with Churches abroad and the carrying out of the recommendations of the Oxford Conference with particular reference to the World Council plans.	
Total	$50,000.

The Christian Unity Fund Committee appeals to Christian leaders, both lay and clergy, to give their support to the work of the World Council of Churches.

Moral support, in the form of membership in the Friends of the World Council, can be given by virtually every Christian in the land.

Financial help must come from individuals, from the budgets of local churches, and from entire denominations.

The Committee is confident that both moral and financial support will be forthcoming in full measure.

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CHRISTIAN UNITY FUND

(OXFORD-EDINBURGH CONTINUATION PROGRAM)

Room 80 — 297 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Date....., 19.....

In consideration of the gifts and pledges of others for the same purpose, I promise to pay to the Christian Unity Fund the sum of.....Dollars ($.....) for the program of the World Conference on Faith and Order, and, of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work.

Payable at the option of the undersigned in accordance with the plan checked below:

☐ Cash in full herewith.

☐ Cash herewith $..... Balance payable.....

Signed .....

Address .....

Checks made payable to the CHRISTIAN UNITY FUND may be sent to:

W. Rodman Parvin, Treasurer, c/o Guaranty Trust Company, 524 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.